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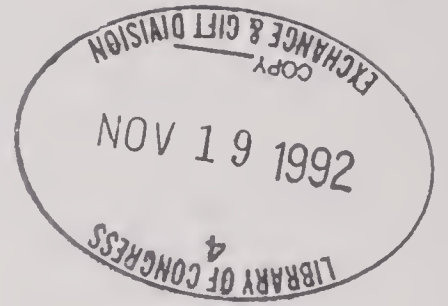
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COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
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REPORT OF THE HELSINKI COMMISSION
ON
THE U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION VISIT
TO
ALBANIA, BULGARIA, CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND BERLIN
(CODEL DeCONCINI)

AUGUST 18 - 24, 1990

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CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Albania	3
I. Objectives	3
II. The Context	3
III. The Visit	6
IV. Observations	8
V. Conclusion	11
Bulgaria	15
I. Objectives	15
II. The Context	15
III. The Visit	17
Czechoslovakia	21
I. Overview and Objectives	21
II. Context of the Visit	21
III. Meetings	25
Berlin	31
I. Objectives	31
II. The Context	31
III. The Visit	32
IV. Observations	33

INTRODUCTION

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe -- also known as the Helsinki Commission -- was created in 1976 by Public Law 94-304 with a mandate to monitor and encourage compliance with the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which was signed in Helsinki, Finland, on August 1, 1975, by the leaders of 33 European countries, the United States and Canada.

The Helsinki Final Act and subsequent CSCE documents encompass nearly every aspect of relations between States, including: military-security; economic, scientific and environmental cooperation; cultural and education exchanges; and human rights and other humanitarian concerns. The goal has been to lower the barriers which have artificially divided Europe into East and West for more than four decades. Periodic review meetings have been held to continue this process: Belgrade (1977-78), Madrid (1980-83), and Vienna (1986-89), with the next scheduled for Helsinki in March 1992. Experts meetings on specific issues and lasting only a few weeks are held in between these main meetings.

The Commission consists of nine members from the U.S. Senate, nine members from the U.S. House of Representatives, and one member each the Departments of State, Commerce and Defense. The positions of Chairman and Co-Chairman are shared by the House and the Senate and rotate every two years, when a new Congress convenes. The Commission is currently chaired by Senator Dennis DeConcini (D-AZ) and Co-Chaired by Representative Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD). A professional staff of approximately 15 persons assists the Commissioners in their work.

The Commission carries out its mandate in a variety of ways. First, it gathers and disseminates information on Helsinki-related topics both to the U.S. Congress and the public. It frequently holds public hearings with expert witnesses focusing on these topics. Similarly, the Commission issues reports on the implementation of the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent CSCE documents. The Commission plays a unique role in assisting and planning the execution of U.S. policy at CSCE meetings and participates as full members of the U.S. delegations to these meetings.

Finally members of the Commission maintain regular contacts with parliamentarians, government officials and private individuals from other Helsinki-signatory States. Such contacts often take the form of Commission delegations to other countries, usually with the participation of other Members of Congress, such as the August 1990 visit to Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Berlin.

VISIT TO ALBANIA

August 19-21, 1990

I. OBJECTIVES

The Commission delegation visit to Albania had two basic purposes. The first was to initiate a dialogue with Albanian officials on CSCE-related issues. In 1990, the Albanian Government for the first time expressed a desire to participate in the CSCE, or Helsinki, process. In fact, Albania was granted the status of an observer at recent CSCE meetings, beginning with the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, which took place in June 1990. In light of this development and the Commission mandate to follow the Helsinki process, the Commission viewed the establishment of a discussion of the CSCE with Albanian officials similar to that already established with CSCE signatories.

The second goal of the delegation was to obtain a firsthand view of the situation in Albania, particularly as it related to human rights. Since official relations were broken in 1939, there have been virtually no contacts between the United States and Albania, and little is therefore known about Albanian society or how the political and economic systems function. In addition to seeing Tirane, the capital of the country, the Commission expressed an interest in travelling to Durres, a city on the Adriatic coast, as well as to the historic town of Kruje.

Overall, the delegation was able to accomplish these limited objectives. During the visit, the Commission was able to initiate what is hoped to be an on-going dialogue. All of the Commission's requests for meetings or activities were basically met, with one critical exception. The delegation had requested to visit the prison labor camp known to exist at Spac, north of Tirane. This request, made in light of numerous reports about the harsh treatment accorded prisoners -- especially political prisoners -- in Spac, was similar to those made by the Commission when it visited other countries, but Albanian officials denied the request.

II. THE CONTEXT

The Commission delegation visit to Albania came at a time of great change in Europe and, for the first time since World War II, potentially far-reaching change in Albania itself.

Albania, situated between Greece and Yugoslavia on the Adriatic coast, is a relatively small country with a population of about 3 million people. According to official figures, 98 percent of the population is ethnically Albanian, linguistically divided into the northern Ghegs and the southern Tosks. Reflecting Ottoman Turk, Greek, and Italian influences, Albanians can also be divided according to religious background, with around 70 percent coming from Muslim, 20 percent from Orthodox and 10 percent from Roman Catholic families, although Albania today claims to be the world's first atheist state. The remainder of the population consists mostly of a Greek minority, although there are also Macedonians, Montenegrins, Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and a few other ethnic groups as well. The number of Greeks is unknown but is believed to be somewhere between the official estimate of about 60,000 and the figure of 400,000 claimed by some Greek organizations.

Albania has a long history of foreign rulers and was the last Balkan state to achieve independence, freeing itself from the Ottomans only in 1912. Being a mountainous, relatively inaccessible region, however, the country was able to retain not only its linguistic uniqueness but the old, clan-oriented customs of the Albanian people as well. Albania was ruled before the war by King Zog. After Italy's invasion in 1939, the country was ruled by a puppet regime until liberated by the Communists, led by Enver Hoxha and closely aligned with the Tito's Partisans in Yugoslavia.

Enver Hoxha ruled Albania until his death in 1985. A devout Stalinist, Hoxha sided with the Soviet Union when Tito broke from the Communist bloc in 1948, only to break from the Soviets himself in the early 1960's, following Khrushchev's rapprochement with Yugoslavia. Albania then enhanced its relationship with the People's Republic of China until that country initiated post-Mao reforms and expanded ties with the United States in the late 1970's. Since that time, Albania has maintained the hard Stalinist course on its own, although since Hoxha's death in 1985 there have been efforts to lessen the degree to which the country is isolated internationally, such as establishing bilateral relations with an increasing number of countries and participating in joint meetings of Balkan countries. A member of the United Nations, Albania's participation has been low-key and only in some U.N. bodies.

Formal diplomatic relations between Albania and the United States ended with the Italian invasion of Albania in 1939. Immediately after the war an informal U.S. mission established itself in Tirane, but it was withdrawn in 1946 due to harassment by the authorities. Subsequently, Albanian official statements attacked U.S. policies and leaders, later giving the Soviet Union and then China similar treatment. Moreover, Albania declined participation in the CSCE process, calling the original Conference a Soviet-American attempt to maintain the division and control of Europe.

On the domestic scene, Albania is economically the poorest country in Europe, although it has considerable mineral resources. Albania's record regarding respect for human rights is also very poor. It has strictly controlled the movement of its people, both abroad and in Albania itself. The secret police (Sigurimi) is a powerful organization that has pervaded society, and an extensive system of prisons and labor camps is maintained for those who express even mildly dissenting views. As a result, there is no known organized dissident activity in Albania. The actual number of political prisoners is unknown. In 1990 the Albanian government acknowledged the existence of political prisoners for the first time, giving a figure of 83 in contrast to the 900-1,000 estimated by a recent refugee who was himself a political prisoner or the more than 20,000 claimed by some foreign sources. Religion was prohibited by law in 1967. No churches are open for public worship. While the recognized Greek and Macedonian minorities have some educational opportunities in their native language, there have been attempts to suppress their cohesiveness and cultural identity.

In 1990, there have been signs that Albania is beginning to move away from its isolationist policies. The Albanian government now is seeking to become a participant in the CSCE process and was given observer status both at the Copenhagen Human Dimension Meeting in June as well as the ongoing CSCE military-security negotiations and summit preparations in Vienna. In May 1990, U.N. Secretary General Perez de Cuellar visited Albania.

Albania has also indicated a desire to develop relations with the United States and the Soviet Union. While this announcement was made simultaneously for both countries, it had only reestablished relations with the Soviet Union by the time of the Commission's visit. Meetings on the establishment of U.S.- Albanian relations have taken place and are expected to continue. In May 1990, the Albanian government expressed its willingness to receive a delegation from the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

The domestic front has seen signs of change as well. In January 1990 and on several occasions since, there were reports of large demonstrations for reform in several Albanian cities and towns, which in some cases the Albanian authorities are believed to have brutally repressed. They have played down the extent of the protest or denied they even took place.

Several reforms have been announced which, if implemented, would lead to major changes in Albania, especially in the context of the country's strict adherence to the Stalinist economic and political system. Among the reforms is the abolition of criminal penalties for religious propaganda, liberalization of passport issuance, establishment of a Ministry of Justice, and permission for individuals to sell produce privately and to form small family businesses.

In early July, apparently responding to the lack of implementation of the announced reforms, more than 5,000 Albanian citizens stormed the West German and other embassies in Tirane, seeking to leave the country. A number were known to have been shot by Albanian authorities while running toward the embassies, and the diplomatic area of the city was closed off. As world attention focused on the country and the situation in the embassies became increasingly difficult, however, Albanian authorities eventually decided to permit those in the embassies to leave for Italy, Czechoslovakia, France and elsewhere. Many want to come to the United States, and in August 1990 some went on a hunger strike near the U.S. Embassy in Paris to protest delays in processing. The episode seems to have strengthened reformist trends within the Albanian leadership, as several known hard-liners were replaced by individuals believed to espouse more moderate positions.

There are several possible causes for the recent changes in Albania. From the top, President Alia is believed to be leading a reformist group within the leadership that is gradually gaining strength vis-a-vis the remaining hard-liners, which apparently include Nexhmije Hoxha, the wife of Enver Hoxha and head of the Democratic Front organization. Reformist positions apparently are being strengthened by a steep decline in the country's already poor economic performance. From the bottom, Albanians who have television sets or radios are able to receive local Greek, Yugoslav and Italian broadcasts, in addition to those of Voice of America, the BBC and other worldwide stations. As a result, Albanians are well aware of the wave of political liberalization which swept through the rest of Eastern Europe in 1989 and 1990. Pressure for change also comes from the fact that, as a result of a high birth rate, the population of Albania is young, with half of the country's citizens under 30 years of age. Combined with the poor economic conditions, this population is believed to be growing increasingly restless in its current state of isolation.

III. THE VISIT

When the Commission delegation arrived in Tirane on August 19, it was greeted by a group of Albanian officials led by Rolanda Dhimitri, Vice-Chair of the Permanent Commission on Foreign Affairs of the Albanian People's Assembly and Petraq Pojani, Director of the Department for Multilateral Cooperation of the Albanian Foreign Ministry.

The first item of business was a review of the itinerary for the visit. Earlier, the Commission had proposed a schedule of meetings in which it was interested, adding that it would welcome any additional activities proposed by the Albanian government. Albanian officials said that they would do their best to meet the Commission's requests and would present an itinerary for the delegation's approval upon its arrival, although they indicated earlier that the visit to the Spac labor camp listed on the Commission's schedule would not be allowed. With that main exception, the Commission's requests for meetings and activities were met, with a few additional meetings added, and the delegation therefore agreed to the itinerary.

The delegation was then formally received by Foto Cami, Chair of the Permanent Commission on Foreign Affairs of the People's Assembly as well as a member of the Politburo of the Albanian Party of Labor. Mr. Cami held a private meeting with the delegation and then hosted a dinner in its honor.

During the next 2 days, the delegation met with numerous other senior Albanian officials, including Ramiz Alia, who as President of the Presidium of the Albanian People's Assembly is the titular head of state. Alia also heads the Party of Labor, serving as First Secretary. Private meetings were also held with Kleanthi Koci, President of the Supreme Court of Albania, and Reis Malile, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In addition to meetings with high-level officials, the delegation wanted to meet with other individuals and groups who were involved in activities of interest or concern to the Commission, particularly human rights. This proved to be a significantly more difficult exercise than was the case during Commission visits to other Communist countries, because even in those countries where the most basic human rights were being denied, individuals, either alone or organized in groups, were known to engage in dissenting activities. Control of society in Albania, on the other hand, has been so pervasive that there were no known human rights activists with whom the delegation could meet. The absence of a United States Embassy in Tirane contributed to this problem, as U.S. embassies in other East European countries have played an important role in seeking and maintaining contacts with independent groups and individual dissidents.

Among those with whom the Commission delegation did meet were three representatives of the Democratic Front for the Greek Minority, which is a member organization of the Democratic Front which serves to transmit official policies and positions to the population. The delegation also met with Nikolla Konomi, rector of the University of Tirane, and a group of about 20 English-speaking university students. The delegation also arranged, separate from the itinerary prepared by the Albanian government, private meetings with representatives of the Italian and Greek embassies, including a visit to the Greek consulate to examine the difficult situation facing foreign embassies. Representatives from all embassies of the CSCE countries in Tirane, along with a long list of Albanian government officials, journalists, economists, writers and other prominent figures attended a Commission-hosted reception, which also permitted a widening of contacts in a less formal setting.

The delegation requested and received some free time in Tirane during which its members could tour Tirane, examine what everyday life there was like, and perhaps talk with some people. Unfortunately, the Albanian government reacted negatively to a Commission request that it bring its own interpreter, and the presence of an interpreter provided by the Albanian government itself likely hindered the openness of the very few contacts that were made with the public. The delegation was able to initiate a conversation with some individuals on Skenderbeg Square in the center of Tirane, which

included not only Albanian citizens but also several Albanian-Americans visiting the country. For the most part, however, passers-by seemed to want to avoid being seen talking to the delegation. Members of the delegation, with the helpful escort of officials from the Foreign Ministry and the People's Assembly, took a driving tour of the Tirane, including a stop at the monument to Albanian martyrs which overlooks the city, and visited the National Historical Museum of Albania and to Enver Hoxha Museum.

Finally, in order to examine the situation in the countryside and other cities, the Commission asked to visit the city of Durres on the Adriatic coast, as well as the historic town of Kruje, in the mountains north of Tirane, where the Albanian national hero Skenderbeg had his castle. In Durres, members of the delegation attended a luncheon hosted by Luan Babameto, Chairman of the Executive Committee of Durres District, the equivalent of a city mayor. In Kruje, the delegation toured a museum built over the ruins of Skenderbeg's castle. The Commission then departed Albania for its next destination.

IV. OBSERVATIONS

During the entire course of the delegation's 3-day stay, the Albanian government was very hospitable. Vehicles were provided for transportation, and officials who escorted the delegation were extremely helpful in answering questions and describing the situation in Albania as they saw it. Despite a strained relationships between the Albanian government and foreign embassies, the delegation was not hindered in making contact with foreign diplomats in Tirane and visiting the diplomatic district of the city.

There was little if any variance in the views presented by Albanian officials, or, for that matter, by Albanians who were not representatives of the government. Most issues were explained in the context of Albania's troubled history, with the centuries of foreign occupation and numerous wars in the Balkans responsible for most of the country's social and economic problems and necessitating a unique course of action. A related point repeatedly raised was the need for efforts to maintain the unity of Albania, which, it was argued, was an especially difficult task given the fact that its relatively small population was previously divided among three major and very different religions. This was most strongly stated by Foto Cami who, in response to a question about the lack of places of worship in Albania, said that the religion of Albania was "being Albanian."

When the CSCE process was discussed, Albanian officials expressed a strong desire to advance from the status of observer it had been granted at recent meetings to that of a full member. Full members are permitted to speak in the meetings, introduce proposals, and participate in decisions based on the rule of consensus. The officials added that the Albanian government had reviewed all CSCE documents thoroughly and is willing to commit itself to all of them, from the Helsinki Final Act of August 1975 to the document of the Copenhagen Human Dimension Meeting which was adopted in June 1990.

On this point, Chairman Deconcini, Senator Sarbanes and Representative Moody expressed support for granting Albania observer status at CSCE meetings. Noting that CSCE made human rights a subject for international scrutiny, however, they also said that the Albanian government should bring its performance -- i.e., policies and practices -- significantly closer to what would be considered compliance with CSCE provisions being granted full membership in the process. The Albanian reaction was that "preconditions" such as this were unfair, since many governments had signed the Final Act and then for years violated its provisions. The delegation explained that there was a fundamental difference between the two situations. Albania, on the one hand, is now trying to attain full membership in the CSCE, since it was not an participant in the original CSCE negotiations by its own choice, while, on the other hand, there is no requirement to maintain membership once that status was attained. Mention was also made of the extent to which past non-implementation had restrained progress in the CSCE over the years. When asked why Albania declined to participate in the Helsinki process from the beginning, President Alia described the original Soviet objectives for the Conference, which was to legitimize its hold on Eastern Europe. He said that the end of the Cold War has made it possible for Albania to become a more active player in European affairs.

On human rights in Albania, the Commission delegation questioned Albanian officials about political prisoners, denial of religious and minority rights, the lack of political pluralism and the shooting of individuals attempting to flee across the border. Albanian officials argued that reports in the West of human rights violations in Albania were either the result of misunderstanding the specific situation in Albania or foreign propaganda. The delegation suggested that Albania permit objective human rights organizations, such as the International Helsinki Federation and Amnesty International, to visit Albania and examine the situation firsthand.

The Albanian officials with whom the delegation met expressed agreement with the steps toward democratization that are now taking place. They detailed recent reforms, especially those eliminating religious propaganda as a criminal offence and granting Albanian citizens permission to obtain a passport for travel abroad. Mention was made as well of electoral reforms which will allow more seats to be contested by multiple candidates, although it was argued that democratic decision-making within the Party made tolerance of alternative parties unnecessary and possibly counter-productive. This last point was repeated by university students, who maintained that the large number of parties in Romania and elsewhere only spawned confusion. Kleanthi Koci, President of the Supreme Court, also noted how the number of criminal offenses for which the death penalty could be used as a sentence has been lowered from more than 40 in the 1950's to 11 today. The delegation noted that the Commission had welcomed the announcement of reforms and expressed hope that they and other needed reforms would be implemented. Upon the delegation's departure, the members were given English-language translations of recently adopted legislative changes in Albania.

The absence of places of worship was repeatedly raised with the Albanians, especially since some members of the delegation wanted to go to church on Sunday, the day it arrived. The response was consistently that the people don't want places of worship, and that members of the clergy are known in Albania for their collaboration with foreign powers. It was acknowledged, however, that there are believers in Albania, although in most cases these are said to be older people. While the delegation indeed did not speak to anybody who said that they did wish to establish a place a worship, it expressed extreme skepticism about the assertion that nobody exists who does, especially during discussions with the members of the Democratic Front for the Greek Minority, where Senator DeConcini pointed out that everywhere else in the world where there are Greeks, there are also Greek churches. If places of worship were opened, he predicted, people would come.

On minority issues, the delegation raised concerns over allegations that members of minority groups were discriminated against and, at times, were forcibly dispersed from their native regions to other parts of the country. There were also reports that, in the past, parents could not give their children some Christian names common to their ethnic group. Albanian officials and the members of the Democratic Front for the Greek Minority denied these allegations. The members of Democratic Front, the delegation concluded, represented the Albanian government more than the Greek minority. The delegation was informed that their Greek-language newspaper did not cover issues of special concern to the Greek minority but simply translated the Albanian press into Greek. The only acknowledgement by the Democratic Front that there have been problems for Greeks in Albania was when they reported that things have improved for the minority in recent years.

On foreign policy, Albanian officials said that the apparent ending of the Cold War was the primary motive for Albania's increased international activity, which included their desire to join the CSCE process and to establish relations with both the United States and the Soviet Union. Both President Alia and Foreign Minister Malile described past Soviet policies, especially the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, as justification of Albania's previous course, both internationally and domestically. They also noted their increased participation in cooperative efforts among Balkan nations, including their decision to host a meeting of Balkan foreign ministers in October 1990. Alia and Malile both were highly critical of Yugoslavia in light of current developments taking place in Kosovo, the overwhelming majority of the population of which is ethnically Albanian. They emphasized, however, that Albania is not and will not make any territorial claims regarding Kosovo.

The most visible and immediate diplomatic problem in Albania is the relationship between the foreign embassies in Tirane and the Albanian government. Especially since the storming of the embassies in early July, which diplomats viewed as essentially a spontaneous event, this relationship has clearly worsened. The delegation heard reports about violations of diplomatic norms, such as Albanian authorities entering diplomatic

premises and even the physical harassment of diplomats, including an Ambassador. The delegation was told that, after initially shooting at Albanian citizens trying to gain entry to embassies in July, the authorities began to encourage and assist entry in an apparent attempt to "suffocate" the embassies. The Albanian authorities also refused permission for foreign air carriers to land in Albania to deliver additional supplies necessary to take care of the thousands of people who did enter and then stayed on embassy grounds.

Since that time, the diplomatic area -- essentially a street on which most embassies are located -- has been closed off on either end with gates to control entry, and large concrete walls have been erected around the entire area and between some embassies without consultation, with jagged pieces of broken glass attached to tops of the walls to prevent people from climbing over them. Hundreds of Albanians, after receiving passports wait outside the walled area awaiting permission to enter a consulate to obtain a visa. At the time of the delegation visit, only Greece and Italy were known to be processing visas, since other embassies were closed for repairs in light of the large number of people who had occupied their premises for several days. The sudden decision to grant passports has led to a large backlog of applications for visas, requiring only a select number of people to be permitted in the consulate offices each day. The delegation was told that those waiting for visa processing are being encouraged by Albanian officials to blame the foreign embassies for the problems they are facing as a result.

The Commission delegation raised the problems facing foreign embassies in Tirane with Albanian officials, especially in light of the talks underway to resume diplomatic relations between the United States and Albania. Chairman DeConcini compared the wall going up in Tirane to the one coming down in Berlin. He also told President Alia that he hoped U.S.- Albanian relations will soon be reestablished but was concerned about how American diplomats might be treated in the future. Alia's response, as well as that of other Albanian officials, was that the embassies were the cause of the problems they have faced since July, especially to the extent they encourage Albanian citizens to leave the country. They attributed all complaints and negative comments about the situation in Albania made by the foreign embassies to reflect a prejudice against the country.

V. CONCLUSION

On August 22, 1990, the day after the Commission visit to Albania had concluded, the three congressional members of the delegation -- Chairman DeConcini, Senator Sarbanes and Representative Moody, made the following joint statement:

"Our congressional delegation went to Albania in the context of that country's desire to end its relative isolation in the world by developing relations with the United States of America as well as joining the 35-member Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe,

known as the CSCE or Helsinki process. The purpose of this of this 3-day visit was to move beyond simply welcoming this positive development by initiating a dialogue on CSCE-related issues, including human rights. We also wanted to obtain for ourselves a better picture of how the Albanian Government's policies and practices reflect the commitments it would undertake if it were to become a full member of the CSCE.

"The Albanian Government extended warm hospitality to us during the entire course of our stay. While not all of our requests, such as a visit to a prison labor camp, were granted, the program prepared for us provided a good first look at the situation in Albania, and we were able to learn a great deal. Among many other officials, we met with President Ramiz Alia, Foreign Minister Reis Malile, Supreme Court chairman Kleanthi Koci, and Foto Cami, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Permanent Commission of the Albanian Peoples' Assembly. We also met with members of the popular front organization, university students and a number of cultural figures, economists, journalists, foreign diplomats and other prominent individuals, many of whom attended a Commission-hosted reception.

"We did not agree on many issues, particularly those relating to human rights, but our discussions were nevertheless very frank and open. We believe the dialogue we initiated needs to be broadened and strengthened. Albanian officials indicated a desire to end the decades of isolation and to develop better relations with the United States.

"Albania has enjoyed observer status at the most recent meeting of the Helsinki process, beginning with the Human Dimension Meeting which took place in Copenhagen in June. The congressional delegation stated its continued support for Albanian observer status at future meetings. Albanian officials indicated their interest in attaining full membership in the CSCE in the near future.

"We expressed our agreement with that objective after Albania formally registers its intention to honor all existing CSCE commitments and demonstrates the seriousness of its intentions by compliance with these provisions than is now the case. The Albanians said that they would not accept any conditions on membership beyond what had been accepted by the 35 member states.

"In this context, the delegation supported recent and positive reform efforts, including greater freedom for Albanian citizens to travel abroad and the removal of religious propaganda as an offense punishable under the criminal code. We expressed our continued concerns, however, over reports of major human rights violations, including a sizeable number of political prisoners, severe restrictions on religious practices made evident by the absence of a single functioning place of worship in the country, the total control imposed on the Albanian press, radio and television, and certain restrictions imposed on minority rights for members of the Greek and other minorities in Albania.

Finally, while there may soon be increased possibilities for some government seats to be contested by more than one candidate, the Workers' Party of Albania which now rules the country shows no sign of being willing to share its current monopoly on political power with alternative or opposition parties. Indeed, it seems as if no independent organizations or groups of individuals with dissenting views are even permitted in Albania today.

"Given Albania's current level of performance in these and other areas, we are of the opinion that, as a full CSCE member, Albania would be glaringly out of step with the rapidly developing process of democratization, political pluralism, the rule of law and free market economies that is taking place throughout Europe. We suggested that, in order to speed up the process of democratization and to have a clearer, more accurate picture of what human rights problems exist in Albania, the Albanian Government translate into Albanian and make available to the public full texts of existing CSCE documents, permit existing human rights organizations from abroad to visit Albania and investigate alleged human rights abuses, and tolerate the formation of independent Helsinki monitoring groups within Albania itself. Albanian officials expressed a willingness to consider these suggestions.

"In the meantime, we hope the dialogue we have initiated during our visit can be broadened, expanded and intensified. This, we feel, would be an important step in promoting mutual understanding between the Albanian and American peoples."

VISIT TO BULGARIA

August 22, 1990

I. OBJECTIVES

The last time the Commission visited Bulgaria was in April 1990, just prior to the first free elections that country held since World War II. Given the degree of repression under Communist rule, serious questions arose at that time as to how well Bulgaria would proceed in developing a democratic political system and a pluralistic society. While the subsequent elections were free, they were nevertheless tainted by irregularities which made them less fair than was hoped.

The major objective of the visit to Bulgaria, therefore, was first to underscore the Commission support for Bulgarian efforts to implement major political and economic reform and, second, to discuss persistent problem areas such as restoring the rights of members of the Turkish minority and opening to public scrutiny information on the past activities of the Bulgarian secret police.

The delegation's schedule precluded the longer stay in Bulgaria that these issues deserved, but, in its meetings with the President, Zhelyu Zhelev, and the Prime Minister, Andrei Lukanov, it was able to have a useful dialogue on issues of concern with the leading political authorities in the country.

II. THE CONTEXT

Following the November 9, 1989, ouster of long-time Communist Party chief Todor Zhivkov, Bulgaria's new communist leadership instituted sweeping political and economic reforms. Changes made following Zhivkov's removal have included: repeal of legislation used to imprison dissidents; the release of political prisoners; the restoration of the rights of ethnic Turks and other minorities; greater openness regarding travel and emigration; a freer flow of information; renunciation of the Communist Party's leading role; and the holding of multi-party elections which have resulted in a new parliament.

During the first four months of 1990, the ruling Communist Party (which in February changed its name to the Bulgarian Socialist Party) engaged in roundtable talks with the rapidly growing opposition UDF (Union of Democratic Forces). On March 12, they reached agreement on the peaceful transition to a democratic system, establishing a parliament elected by "free and competitive elections," and "the guaranteeing of equality of all forms of ownership". On March 30, the roundtable reached further agreements designed to underpin Bulgaria's transition to a parliamentary democracy through a new electoral law and the creation of political parties.

On June 10 and 17, the first freely contested elections in post-War Bulgaria were held. These elections can best be summed up as having been free and democratic, but not completely fair (with many reports of voter intimidation, especially in the countryside). The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) won 211 out of 400 seats in Parliament. The main opposition group -- the UDF -- won 144 seats and the ethnic-Turkish based "Movement for Rights and Freedoms" won 23 seats.

Bulgaria has continued to travel a rocky road to democracy since the elections. On July 6, for example, Bulgarian President Petur Mladenov, who had replaced Zhivkov last November, resigned over charges that he had threatened to use tanks to disperse an anti-Government protest last December. There have been protests and strikes targeting, among other things, the slow pace of reforms, electoral fraud, price-hikes and pollution. These have diminished following the August 1 election by the new Parliament (the Grand National Assembly) of opposition leader Zhelyu Zhelev to Bulgaria's Presidency, breaking a 3-week deadlock in which there were six rounds of voting. Until Zhelev's election, the opposition (UDF) had steadfastly resisted Socialist Prime Minister Andrei Lukanov's calls for UDF participation in a coalition government. Since his election, President Zhelev has continued to favor a "cabinet of experts" and not a coalition government.

The new Bulgarian government faces numerous challenges in transforming Bulgaria into a democratic, pluralistic state with a market-oriented economy. Various economic reforms are being proposed to facilitate Bulgaria's transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, including increasing economic independence of enterprises, freeing prices from state control, and offering options for private, cooperative and state ownership of property.

Bulgaria faces a growing economic crisis, however, the result of a centralized command economy dominated by decades of inefficiency, corruption and shortages. The economy is stagnant, with declining industrial production, shortages of commodities, rising prices and growing unemployment. Bulgaria has suspended payments on its 10.2 billion dollar foreign debt. Also, the Soviets have cut back on crude oil shipments to Bulgaria and fuel prices have risen sharply. Hard currency reserves have collapsed from one billion dollars in January to less than 200 million dollars at the present time. Adhering to the Iraq embargo will only increase strains on the economy. Iraq owes an estimated one billion dollars to Bulgaria. Sofia was expecting to convert part of these loans into oil. Bulgaria had signed a contract with Iraq for the supply of five million tons spread over 4 years.

Bulgaria has applied to join the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and in May signed a 10-year agreement on trade and economic cooperation with the European Community.

In December 1989, the Bulgarian government restored the rights of ethnic Turks and other Muslim minorities (approx. 15 percent of the population), reversing Zhivkov's notorious assimilation campaign. Since then, conditions have generally improved -- Turks are again allowed to use their own names, speak their language etc., and they now have some voice in Parliament (foremost, 23 representatives of Ahmet Dogan's ethnic-Turkish based "Rights and Freedoms Movement"). Also, nearly half of the ethnic Turks who left Bulgaria in last summer's exodus have returned.

Despite, or perhaps because of these improvements, there have been tensions between the Turkish minority and some ethnic Bulgarian nationalists, who fear ethnic Turkish resurgence and who have recently staged strikes against the presence of "Turks in Parliament."

III. THE VISIT

The delegation arrived in Bulgaria late in the evening of August 21. Its first activity was a spontaneous one: delegation members visited an area near the National Assembly in the center of Sofia where demonstrators had gathered to voice dissatisfaction with the pace of change and, more specifically, the continued existence of symbols of the former Communist regime on official buildings. When demonstrators saw from a considerable distance members of the delegation inside the police barricades, they mistakenly took them for Assembly members and angrily shouted "Communist! Communist!" However, when the delegation approached the crowd, which suddenly realized it was a group of Americans, chants turned immediately to an enthusiastic and welcoming "U.S.A.!, U.S.A.!" -- a sign of the popularity which the United States is now enjoying in Bulgaria.

On the morning of August 22, after a briefing on the current situation in Bulgaria by the U.S. Charge d' Affaires, the Commission first met with President Zhelyu Zhelev and some of his chief advisors. Zhelev began with an overview of efforts to further democratize the political system and marketize the economy in the post-election period. He called political changes to date irreversible, adding that the only danger is that future efforts at change might not take place in peaceful channels. While he said he would not use the Polish term "shock therapy," he said that radical economic reform would take place as quickly as possible. The President expressed gratitude for U.S. interest and help in making democratization possible in Bulgaria.

On economic issues, Zhelev gave a bleak picture of the economic situation in Bulgaria, made worse by the Persian Gulf crisis. The Soviet Union had reduced its deliveries to Bulgaria, and Iraq owed Bulgaria 1.2 billion dollars, which was to be paid with oil. He said that this situation, along with a bad harvest this year threatened economic reform and could lead to major shortages as winter approached. He reported that Bulgaria was requesting assistance from the United States, the United Nations and the European Community. The delegation said that it would pursue specific requests for assistance from the United States. When it cautioned that the United States had some economic difficulties which might limit the extent of U.S. assistance, Zhelev remarked that he wished Bulgaria would have the economic problems of the United States.

When asked about how the new government was dealing with the secret police of the Communist regime, President Zhelev committed himself to expose past crimes that were previously covered up. The Socialist Party did not oppose such efforts, it was added, but did at times obstruct them. Control of the secret police was described as within the jurisdiction of the President as a national defense issue.

The meeting with Prime Minister Andrei Lukanov immediately followed the meeting with President Zhelev. Lukanov shared Zhelev's view that the changes which had taken place in Bulgaria since late 1989 were irreversible. He described the major difference between his own Socialist Party and the Union of Democratic Forces as centering on whether or not socialism would be one of the pillars of Bulgarian democracy. He said that within the Socialist Party the remnants of Stalinism still exist, but they were very weak and losing ground every day.

Like Zhelev, Lukanov also stressed the economic plight which Bulgaria now faces, including a heavy external debt, on which it had to stop payment, and which was now made worse by the Persian Gulf crisis. He also said that the disintegration of the East bloc trading organization -- the Council on Mutual Economic Assistance (also known as CMEA or COMECON) -- had disrupted the Bulgarian economy.

The discussion then turned to the situation of the Turkish minority. Prime Minister Lukanov maintained that all measures directed against the "Muslim population" in 1984 and 1985 had been abolished, and the main issue now concerns the legal procedure by which those who want to return to their Muslim name can do so. He added, however, that some Muslims wanted to retain their new Slavic names, as they felt themselves fully integrated into Bulgarian society. Lukanov also said that there were still popular fears in Bulgaria about Turkey, and worries that neither the USSR nor the United States, the United Nations nor anybody else would come to Bulgaria's aid if the country were attacked by Turkey. He said that he would soon visit Turkish President Ozal, however, who was a close friend and with whom he hoped to improve relations.

A wide range of other issues was also raised with Lukanov. Regarding the activities of the secret police, he said that Bulgaria would cooperate with foreign governments on specific cases involving the Bulgarian secret police, such as on the famous "umbrella case" with British officials; that he doubted Bulgarian complicity in the 1981 assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II; and that the files of the secret police would likely be opened, but only after consideration was first given to the implications of specific files on national security concerns. The Prime Minister also acknowledged severe environmental problems in the country, but claimed that clean-up efforts such as closing the worst polluting plants would be difficult from an economic point of view. On Balkan cooperation, Lukanov expressed concern over increased instability in both Yugoslavia and Albania, mentioning specifically the resurfacing of the Macedonian question. He commented that Albanians are known to be the most stubborn among stubborn peoples, and that the unique form of totalitarianism in Albania will be a problem. He added, however, that granting the Albanian request to become a full member of the CSCE process was one important way to help those within Albania who are working for reform.

VISIT TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA

August 22-23, 1990

I. OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

Chairman DeConcini's visit to Czechoslovakia focused on two concerns. First, the Commission wanted to discuss Czechoslovak initiatives within the Helsinki process; second, Chairman DeConcini wanted to follow-up on environmental questions which Czech Premier Pithart had raised during his visit to Washington earlier this year.

The Czechoslovakia's new government has been particularly active with respect to the Helsinki process for several reasons. Many of Prague's new leaders come out of the human rights community, and they believe that the Helsinki process directly contributed to the democratic "velvet revolution" which took place in Czechoslovakia last November and December. These new leaders also see the Helsinki process as a route of integration into Europe and a possible source of security guarantees outside the Warsaw Pact.

The Commission also focused on environmental issues during its visit to Czechoslovakia. Environmental issues, part of Basket II in the Helsinki process, have taken on a new prominence now that many traditional human rights issues are being resolved. Moreover, it has become increasingly clear that environmental problems do not recognize national borders. This is an area where multilateral efforts must be undertaken if the participating States are to meet with success.

II. CONTEXT OF THE VISIT

Prelude to Revolution:

- Czechoslovakia's human rights record was a relatively poor one. The communist authorities paid lip service to the concepts of *perestroika* and *glasnost* without implementing them.
- Nevertheless, in 1988-89, independent opposition activities such as demonstrations, publishing, and religious activism grew, in spite of increasing repression.
- On 17 November, students attempted to hold an independent demonstration in Prague. The authorities' response was particularly brutal, fueling rumors that a student had been clubbed to death. Although the rumor turned out to be untrue, the ruthless police actions on the 17th triggered massive protest demonstrations; the demonstrations grew each day, and each day spread to more cities.

- On 19 November, a new group calling itself *Civic Forum* emerged, claiming to represent virtually every opposition group in Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak government responded to the demonstrations and to the new group by stalling, offering half-measure reforms. Finally, on 27 November *Civic Forum* organized a 2-hour work stoppage which paralyzed the country, proving it was a force with which to be reckoned. The work stoppage is estimated to have involved upwards of six million people and 75% of the work force.

The First Wave of Political Changes:

The Communist leadership in Prague continued to make promises without delivering during the first half of December; but by the second half of December, after Civic Forum threatened additional work stops, opposition demands began to be met. The following wave of reform was subsequently implemented in the first few months after the "Velvet Revolution":

- the Federal Assembly voted on 29 November to remove the "leading role of the Communist Party" language from the Constitution;
- all known political prisoners were released;
- Marxism-Leninism was removed as a required course from school curricula;
- travel restrictions have been ended (open borders);
- control over the People's Militia was transferred from the Party to the Government;
- Communist President Gustav Husak stepped down on 10 December and Vaclav Havel was voted to replace him on 29 December;
- the Federal Assembly on 12 December voted to hold former General Secretary Jakes responsible for police brutality on 17 November;
- on 12 December the Federal Assembly passed a resolution condemning the 1968 Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia;
- Alexander Dubcek, leader of the 1968 Prague Spring, was elected Chairman of the Federal Assembly on 28 December;
- newly appointed Foreign Minister Jiri Dienstbier announced that the "temporary" 1968 agreement allowing Soviet troops to remain in Czechoslovakia was invalid because it was agreed to under duress;
- approximately 40 Czechoslovak ambassadors were recalled;
- the Politburo announced it would end the *nomenklatura* system of reserving certain jobs for party functionaries;
- a Foreign Minister spokesperson announced on 9 January that Soviet troops should withdraw from Czechoslovakia by the end of the year (subsequently extended to mid-1991);
- the secret police was abolished on 1 February.

The New Government's Five-Point Program, announced by Prime Minister Calfa on 3 July:

- Improve the state administrative system, including measures to improve relations between the central government and local districts and between the Czech and Slovak Republics;
- Effect a transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, while stabilizing the economy and keeping inflation and unemployment under control;
- Create a healthy environment and reduce fuel and energy consumption;
- Defend human rights;
- Draw Czechoslovakia back into the community of European nations.

Key Domestic Political Problems Which Remain:

- Who will *really* control the secret police, and how?
- How can you maintain accountability of the former leadership (necessary to establish the credibility for the new leadership), without degenerating into a cycle of revenge?
- How can people who have been forcibly kept out of politics for four decades learn how to establish political parties and, ultimately, govern a country?
- Can relations between the country's various ethnic groups, particularly the Czechs and the Slovaks, be reflected in a constitutional framework that is acceptable to all parties?

Helsinki Process

The new Czechoslovak government has made the CSCE process one of its foreign policy priorities, seeing in it a route of integration into Europe and a possible source of security guarantees outside the Warsaw Pact. At the Copenhagen Meeting in June, Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Dienstbier proposed Prague as a site for a future CSCE secretariat; Secretary Baker has expressed some support for this. In Vienna, the Czechoslovaks have sought to play a mediating role in facilitating preparations for the Paris summit (tentatively set for November) and the CSBMs, as well as to remind the conference of the importance of the larger process.

From a security standpoint, Czechoslovakia sees the Helsinki process as capable of filling the growing void left by the virtual dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the retreat of the Soviet Union. Foreign Minister Dienstbier has quipped that, "there's nothing wrong with NATO -- except that we're not in it." Czechoslovak leaders have indicated that they're not adverse to remaining in the Warsaw Pact, but at the same time it is clear that their vision for the Warsaw Pact is so different that the Pact would remain the same in

name only. Their primary concern is that East European countries, including the Soviet Union, not be isolated outside of a NATO security structure.

From a human rights standpoint, it must be remembered that President Havel comes to his new political prominence as a former dissident and member of the (formerly outlawed) Czechoslovak Helsinki Committee and the Charter 77 human rights movement, as does his Foreign Minister, Jiri Dienstbier; his Ambassador to the United States, Rita Klimova; and host of other now high-ranking government and parliamentary officials. In the human rights sphere, Czechoslovakia's new leaders have personally seen a direct cause-and-effect relationship between the reforms which have been achieved in Eastern Europe and the Helsinki process.

At the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension, Czechoslovakia named Dr. Jiri Hajek -- Foreign Minister during the Prague Spring and a man of impeccable human rights credentials -- as head of their delegation. It was at this meeting that a new negotiating group emerged called the "Pentagonale." Consisting of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Italy, and Austria, these neutral and non-aligned, NATO, and Warsaw Pact countries share a set of borders and many common interests. So far, their coordination has been limited to specific areas of interest: in Copenhagen, it was minority rights; elsewhere, they are coordinating road management and other transportation concerns. It remains to be seen how this relationship will evolve. To date, these five have not coordinated their efforts in the military talks in Vienna.

The new Czechoslovak leadership has decided to take on an active role in all areas of CSCE and has proposed several new initiatives. For example, while visiting the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in May, President Havel called for a "Helsinki zone" from Vladivostok to Vancouver that would overcome the division of Europe and promote disarmament. At the Vienna Meeting on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs), Czechoslovakia put forward an ambitious initiative for a European Security Council leading eventually to European federation. When most Western countries rejected the idea as overly ambitious, the Czechoslovaks dropped the more long-range provisions and enlisted the support of the GDR and Poland. They then twice convened all the ambassadors from CSCE countries in Prague to lobby for the initiative prior to the convening of the preparatory conference in July.

The Economic Front:

- Prior to WWII, Czechoslovakia had one of the strongest industrial economies in the world. Although, like elsewhere in Eastern Europe, Communist mismanagement has taken its toll, the economy in Czechoslovakia is relatively better off than in most of its neighboring socialist states.

- At the end of February, the Czechoslovak government passed the first package of legislation aimed at laying the foundation for a transition to a free market economy. But shortly after the revolution, two schools of competing thought emerged regarding the degree and pace of economic reform: a group of radical reformers led by Vaclav Klaus advocating shock therapy on the one hand, and another group led by Valtr Komarek advocating gradual reform on the other. After the June elections, Komarek left the government and the signs indicate a more rapid pace of reform will be pursued.
- At a recent meeting of the Eastern trading organization "CMEA," Czechoslovak Finance Minister Klaus stated that he saw no reason for the continuation of the organization. At that meeting, it was decided the countries would begin trading among themselves on a dollar basis.
- Czechoslovakia's economic priorities now include raising prices to bring them closer to production costs and relieving the state of huge subsidies; breaking up oversized enterprises, offering some of them for sale; moving towards a convertible Czechoslovak *koruna* (crown) in 1991; and decentralizing economic decision-making to the republic and local level. At the same time, the government wants keep unemployment and inflation under control.
- In implementing its reforms, Czechoslovakia must grapple with the same problems of transition that exist elsewhere in the region: how to privatize the state-owned industry, and what to do with the *nomenklatura* (communist party-appointed bureaucracy).

III. MEETINGS

Meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Zdenek Matejka

Deputy Foreign Minister and current Warsaw Pact Secretary General Zdenek Matejka briefed the delegation on efforts to dismantle the military structures of the Warsaw Pact. He described the task of the Warsaw Pact is to dismantle its structures, but noted that differences exist on the scale and timetable for this process. Minister Matejka believes that the Pact will be successfully transformed, but added that Czechoslovakia would support the continued existence of the Warsaw Pact if transformation was not possible.

Minister Matejka said the Helsinki process as "the most important thing in Europe." This view is reflected in the Czechoslovak proposals for a new European security structure and for placing a CSCE secretariat in Prague. Matejka reassured the delegation that NATO will continue to have a role in a restructured Europe, and conceded that problems could arise in a crisis if any new European security system required consensus.

He also admitted that he did not know what might be done should aggression arise within the nations which were part of any new security system. Czechoslovakia's primary concern is that the bloc-to-bloc system which characterized former East-West relations be replaced. In the current climate, things which Czechoslovakia had formerly rejected, such as a conflict resolution mechanism with "obligatory jurisdiction," might be possible.

The Minister stated that the pending disappearance of the GDR had created problems within the Pact, as those weapons which had been assigned to the GDR according to previous agreements now had to be redistributed. While Czechoslovakia is not interested in a higher quota, Bulgaria wants an additional 1,500 tanks to protect itself against what is seen as a Turkish threat, and the Hungarians feel that the limits previously set for them had generally been too low. Matejka was unsure of the Soviet position on reallocation of the limits, and concluded that issues unresolved by the time of the Paris summit would simply have to wait for Helsinki II.

With respect to Albanian participation in the CSCE process, Matejka affirmed that Czechoslovakia has included Albania in discussions concerning a new European security system. Although full membership for Albania in the CSCE process is not warranted, the Minister argued that observer status is most appropriate.

*Meeting with Josef Vavrousek,
Minister of the Federal Commission for the Environment*

Josef Vavrousek, Minister, Federal Commission for the Environment, presented the delegation with a parade of horrors as he recounted the state of the Czechoslovak environment. He indicated that a high priority of the new government was to identify possible sources of assistance to fix existing damage, as well as to gain the know-how to avoid similar problems from reoccurring.

Vavrousek freely admitted that Czechoslovakia created pollution which affected its neighbors. He specifically indicated that Czechoslovakia exports water pollution via the Elbe river to the Baltic region and to air pollution throughout Europe, including acid rain in Finland and Sweden. He also referred to Hungarian concerns about potential environmental problems which completion of the Gabčíkova-Nagymoros dam project would cause, and Austrian allegations that Czechoslovak nuclear power stations were not safe. These examples underscored Minister Vavrousek's assertion that environmental problems cannot be solved by one country alone, but require trans-border efforts.

Vavrousek described ground water pollution and other damage caused by practices of Soviet troops stationed in his country, but indicated Soviet-caused pollution constituted perhaps only five percent of the total environmental problem, and that Czechoslovaks were responsible for the remainder. Vavrousek stated that the Soviets in principle agree they should pay for the damage they had caused, but generally claim environmental damage existed prior to Soviet occupation of various sites.

Vavrousek stated that the federal government was attempting to find a new division of powers for decision making concerning the environment. The federal government now will have three primary responsibilities: 1) the drafting of environmental laws and regulations (which are equally applicable to both republics and compatible with EC standards), 2) the formulation of an overall environmental policy for the entire country compatible with social and economic policies, and 3) international cooperation. Issues not falling in these three areas would be the responsibility of the individual republics.

The Minister voiced his hopes that American firms and Czechoslovak enterprises would cooperate in clean up efforts. However, lack of specific legislation concerning joint ventures and a lack of hard currency were inhibiting such cooperation.

*Meeting with Jaroslav Sabata,
Czech Minister without Portfolio*

The delegation met with Jaroslav Sabata, Minister without Portfolio of the Czech Republic, who spoke primarily in his capacity as chairman of the Preparatory Committee of the Helsinki Citizen's Assembly (HCA), a private organization which will be formally founded at an international meeting in October.

Minister Sabata admitted that he was in a bit of a paradoxical position, serving as a high government official, while at the same time working for a "private organization" concerned with the Helsinki process. Nevertheless, he indicated that such paradoxes are consistent with the times. Sabata indicated that he will not serve in a HCA leadership position after the October meeting.

Sabata described the HCA as a place for private citizens to meet and participate in political life. The HCA will have close contact with other Helsinki-oriented groups, including the Czechoslovak Helsinki Committee. However, unlike the Czechoslovak Helsinki Committee, the HCA will not limit its focus to human rights questions, but will address all aspects of the Helsinki process. The HCA is particularly interested in developing regional cooperation with other like-minded groups from other countries.

Sabata also addressed the issue of Slovak-Czech relations, which he described as having the potential to create a crisis. Both the Czech and Slovak governments agreed that most authority should be vested in the republic governments, but Sabata believes that the Slovak government had moved too quickly on the issue. Sabata estimated that at most only 20% of Slovaks favored independence and called Federal Prime Minister Calfa and Federal Assembly Chairman Alexander Dubcek (both Slovaks) committed federalists. Sabata also noted that other groups in and with connections to Czechoslovakia, such as various ethnic Germans, now have agendas.

*Meeting with Sasa Vondra,
Senior Foreign Policy Advisor to President Havel*

Presidential Foreign Policy advisor Sasa Vondra opened the discussion with consideration of domestic political issues. Vondra speculated that small groups would leave the Forum for their own political organizations. As a result, Civic Forum would become more like an American-style political party, with a broad base and relatively weak party discipline. Vondra said he would personally favor this development.

Vondra expects that local elections conducted in November will be by majoritarian system, and that as a consequence party influence will be lessened. He did not believe that the 96% voter turn-out witnessed in the June elections would be repeated. Vondra hopes that the Civic Forum structure will be changed before the local elections, to give the political movement more direction from the center and a central staff capable of supporting local Civic Forum organizations.

Questioned about the so-called "Pentagonale" group (Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Italy), Vondra assured the delegation that this new negotiating alignment is not an attempt to create a later-day Hapsburg Empire, but rather a reflection of a vacuum on the map of Europe. The real goal of the group is to facilitate regional cooperation within the context of eventual European integration. Vondra expects that in the near future the group will focus primarily on mutual cooperation (e.g., transportation questions) and not security issues.

Vondra also addressed the Czechoslovak proposal for a new European security system. He characterized the concept of two blocs as anachronistic but also stated that he did not like the idea of a neutral Eastern Europe under the protection of NATO, recalling what happened with previous "guarantees" to Czechoslovakia's security in the past. He encouraged those who oppose Czechoslovakia's proposals to improve and refine them. Echoing Matejka's assurances regarding NATO, Vondra went on to say that he favored the creation of a CSCE dispute resolution center to deal with, *inter alia*, ethnic conflicts. NATO and such new mechanisms could complement each other.

Other Activities

The delegation paid a brief call on Frantisek Cardinal Tomasek, Archbishop of Prague to pay their respects and commend His Eminence on his strong support of the democratic movement in Czechoslovakia. Cardinal Tomasek reassured the delegation that reforms providing for religious freedom had been or are being implemented.

DCM Theodore Russell hosted a reception for the delegation on the evening of their arrival. The invitees included many of the traditional human rights activists whom the Commission has supported over the years, including many who are now in public office. Others have remained in the private sector as publishers, academics, and representatives of non-governmental organizations.

The delegation hosted a lunch for Czech Prime Minister Petr Pithart, whom Chairman DeConcini had previously met in Washington. Among those attending the lunch were cabinet officials from the Czech Republic responsible for economic and environmental matters. After the lunch, the delegation proceeded, at the invitation of the Prime Minister, to the site of a former Soviet military base at Janska, near Decin in northern Bohemia. In fact, the base had just been returned to Czechoslovak control a few hours earlier. The purpose of the visit was to examine environmental damage caused by the occupying forces. The delegation was accompanied by environmental officials as well as Czechoslovak army officers.

VISIT TO BERLIN

August 24, 1990

I. OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of the Commission delegation visit to Berlin was to learn the views of senior members of the democratically elected East German government regarding the imminent unification of their country with West Germany. At the time of the visit, the government was in the midst of a crisis as it sought to make decisions on the scheduling and terms of unification in light of a rapidly worsening economic situation. Several senior members of the coalition government, including the Foreign Minister, had resigned after a major rift developed between the leading Christian Democrats (CDU) and their Social Democrat (SPD) partners. Given the major impact German unification is expected to have on European diplomacy, a better understanding of the differences underlying the crisis was considered important.

Other issues which the Commission hoped to discuss with East German officials included efforts to dismantle the East German State Security Service (the "Stasi") and the future of the CSCE process.

II. THE CONTEXT

The Commission delegation visit to Berlin came in the midst of intense debate in East Germany over the timing of unification of the two German states, exacerbated by a growing economic crisis in the country.

Beginning with the opening of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, continual efforts were underway to move toward a rapid unification of East and West Germany. Elections in the German Democratic Republic on March 18, 1990 -- the first and last freely held elections in the GDR -- resulted in a victory for the Christian Democrats, who, led by Lothar de Maiziere, had advocated quicker movement toward unification. On July 1, 1990, an economic and monetary union was established between the two Germanies, which, in merging their respective economic systems, made the West German Deutsche Mark the official currency in both East and West.

As the "Two-plus-Four" negotiations between the two Germanies and the four post-War powers (the United States, United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union) progressed and the time-table for unification advanced, the East German government moved into a crucial period in the late summer of 1990.

Three developments made this time period difficult. First, the East German leaders were, in effect, forced to consider the best way to achieve their own disappearance from the political scene, obviously a problematic and rather unprecedented task. Second, the unification process became increasingly subjected to the internal, electoral politics, as the leading parties in both East and West set forth their own strategies designed to win upcoming, all-German elections. Both West German Chancellor Kohl and de Maiziere had sought to move the elections forward, to coincide with actual unification, but had to back down and agree that December 2, weeks after unification, would be the date of the elections. In the meantime, the SPD in West Germany, headed by Oskar LaFontaine, hoped to play on the concerns of some parts of the West German population by increasingly focusing on the costs of unification, . The third development was the worsening economic situation in East Germany, a result of the initial introduction of competition from Western firms. On August 15, for example, as many as 250,000 East German farmers demonstrated in Berlin and other cities protesting Western agricultural wholesalers with whom they could not compete, forcing East German-grown produce to be dumped.

These developments precipitated a political crisis within the East German government, as several ministers either resigned or were dismissed. By mid-August, the East German Volkskammer was forced to go into extended sessions to work out a final agreement on the date for unification which would bring the crisis to a close. Just prior to the Commission's arrival, it had agreed that October 3 would be the date. It was a compromise between dates proposed by the CDU and the SPD and it immediately followed the CSCE Meeting of Foreign Ministers scheduled for New York on October 1 and 2, permitting other European countries along with the United States and Canada to give their endorsement to unification.

III. THE VISIT

Arriving the night before, the delegation visit began the morning of August 24 with a briefing by the U.S. Ambassador to the German Democratic Republic, Richard C. Barkley, and other U.S. Embassy staff. The remainder of the day consisted of several meetings with East German officials, including Dr. Helmut Domke, State Secretary at the GDR Foreign Ministry, Interior Minister Peter-Michael Diestel and Sabine Bergmann-Pohl, President of the Volkskammer. The delegation also had time to tour the area which divided Berlin into East and West, where the remainder of the once formidable Berlin Wall continued to be chiseled and sold as souvenirs. The Commission had also requested meetings with Prime Minister de Maiziere, Foreign Minister Markus Meckel and West Berlin Mayor Walter Momper, but the crisis in the East German government forced Prime Minister de Maiziere to cancel a meeting, and caused Foreign Minister Meckel to resign just prior to the Commission delegation's arrival. Mayor Momper was unavailable at the time of the visit.

IV. OBSERVATIONS

In the meetings with East German officials, the main topic was the process of German unification and the effects of unification in what was East Germany. Most all East German officials expressed an obvious relief that, after weeks of heated polemics and negotiation, agreement had been reached to have unification take place on October 3. Volkskammer President Bergmann-Pohl described how difficult it is "to dissolve oneself," and Chairman DeConcini complemented the East Germans for making what must have been very difficult decisions.

On foreign policy issues, the unification of Germany was presented as a major step in the longer-term goal of the unification of Europe. East German officials said they attached great importance to the CSCE process and described a proposal the GDR introduced jointly with Poland and Czechoslovakia at the Vienna Preparatory Committee for the CSCE Summit. The proposal called for the establishment of a CSCE institute on Conflict Resolution/Peaceful Settlement of Disputes, and another institute to monitor military issues, such as implementation of Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs). They added, however, that West German views on the institutionalization of the CSCE process differed somewhat from East German views and that West German views would dominate in the post-unification period. When asked about Basket II issues, the East Germans said that, without economic progress, there will be no stable democracy in Eastern Europe. Dr. Wolfgang Schwarz, a foreign policy advisor to Prime Minister de Maiziere, noted with some concern that Basket II was not dealt with in the recent London declaration of NATO leaders on CSCE issues.

On domestic issues, most of the discussion, especially in the meeting with Interior Minister Diestel, focused on efforts to dismantle the State Security Service (Stasi). Diestel said that 86,000 people worked full-time for the Stasi, with an additional one million serving as informants. He called it the best security service in the world. As far as the millions of files on individuals maintained by the Stasi, Diestel noted the argument that they should be made public so that those who associated themselves with the Stasi and its more criminal activities could be brought to justice. He maintained, on the other hand, that it would probably be better to destroy the files, since the information they revealed could not be verified and may very easily have been fabricated, destroying the future of many innocent people. He doubted the ability of the government to store the files securely to prevent their eventual misuse, but added that he would follow the wishes of the Parliament. President Bergmann-Pohl questioned whether the Volkskammer would approve the destruction of the files and argued that efforts to prosecute Stasi members be done with great discretion.

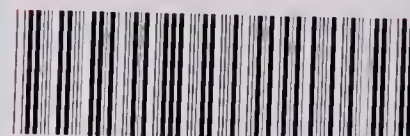
Other domestic issues addressed included East Germany's discussions with Israel regarding the Holocaust, the severity of environmental problems in East Germany and predictions on the outcome of elections later in the year.





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